

VZCZCXRO1015
RR RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKB #1110 2501221
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 071221Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3833
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2358
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHMFISS/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 001110

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [CASC](#) [KCOR](#) [ABLD](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: RECOVERY WORK CONTINUES AT COLLAPSED BUILDING,
WITH NO EFFECT ON BAKU'S CONSTRUCTION BOOM

REF: A. BAKU 1096

[1](#)B. BAKU 1089

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Lu per 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (U) On September 4, the Ministry of Emergency Situations' (MES) Agency for Safety Rules in the Construction Sector published its initial report on the causes of the August 28 collapse of a building under construction in central Baku. According to MES experts, the building collapse was caused by foundation problems and substandard construction work. The GOAJ has detained five suspects including a senior official from the Baku Mayor's Office: Akif Maharramov, Head of the Residential Cooperative Management Bureau.

[1](#)2. (U) According to September 7 press reports, the death toll from the building collapse has reached 20 people. The media reports that there are seven people more buried under the rubble. The rescue works have reached the closing stages, with the MES promising to continue operations until the last body is found. The GOAJ will allocate financial assistance to the victims of the collapse, announcing plans to give AZN 10,000 (USD 11,500) to each victim's family and AZN 3,000 (USD 3,450) to each person injured in the accident.

[1](#)3. (U) According to press reports, a group of specialists from the Russian Emergencies Ministry had arrived in Baku to assess the safety of apartment blocks which had been built in the past few years. The Russian specialists reportedly have brought a mobile system "Struna-2" to the Azerbaijani capital in order to conduct the analysis of technical faculties and the resistance of buildings, which had been built in the past few years. According to a Russian MES official, the specialists will examine approximately 70 apartment blocks, primarily high-rise buildings such as the one that collapsed August 28.

[1](#)4. (C) Several observers, including prominent journalist Shahin Abbasov, believe that this sort of tragic building collapse, if not handled properly, could erode the authority and popularity of the Azerbaijani government. Opposition Musavat Party leader Isa Gambar told emboffs that this incident merely adds to the sense that regular people do not benefit from Azerbaijan's new oil wealth. Ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party Executive Director Ali Ahmadov told emboffs that the opposition would not be able to effectively make political capital out of this incident because the opposition itself was so corrupt. Although this particular incident struck a deep emotional chord among the Azerbaijani public, it has not resulted in any protests or other public displays of discontent. Unfortunately, it is likely that another, perhaps more large-scale incident could occur in the future, as the building collapse has not resulted in any appreciable

change in the frenetic pace of Baku's current construction boom. While the GOAJ made strong public pledges that tighter control would be exercised over all current and future construction projects, work continues unimpeded at the hundreds of buildings under construction in Baku.

DERSE